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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LUXEMBOURG 000363

SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [LU](#)

SUBJECT: Luxembourg Director of Political Affairs and Director of Defense Met with West EUR Director Cormack on Afghanistan

CLASSIFIED BY: Via, Michael, Political and Economic Chief, DOS, Pol;
REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (S) Summary. George Friden, Director for Political Affairs and Jean-Jacques Welfring, Defense Director, explained Luxembourg's planned contributions for Afghanistan during a December 17 visit of West EUR Affairs Director Maureen Cormack to Luxembourg. Friden said Luxembourg was committed to the Afghanistan effort until 2011 but the GOL had some concerns. He stated that there was unease with even the perception created by the "announcement of July 2011" as Luxembourg "didn't want to be the ones left to turn out the lights." Friden emphasized that public opinion and support for Luxembourg's involvement won't last forever and more "good news stories" needed to be forthcoming.

¶2. (S) Friden said the army was undergoing reform but there was no possibility in the short term of increasing the number of Luxembourg soldiers from their current nine, as they had 23 in Kosovo and others in the Congo and Bosnia. He expects there will be pressure in the upcoming meetings in London to be more assertive on the Afghanistan corruption issue. Cormack stated that the U.S. shares GOL's concerns regarding corruption and would welcome an E.U. partnership to manage the corruption issue, but that stating those concerns publicly would not be helpful. Welfring asserted that the GOL was shy about going public with its contributions for Afghanistan but the Minister of Defense, Jean-Marie Halsdorf, decided December 16 to contribute 375,000 USD for expanded satellite access during 2009 which will be expanded to three million USD in 2010. The satellite access support is in addition to other monetary contributions for efforts in Afghanistan. End summary.

¶3. (C) George Friden, Director for Political Affairs and Jean-Jacques Welfring, Defense Director met with West EUR Affairs Director Maureen Cormack and Pol/Econ Chief December 17, at the Ministry of Defense in Luxembourg.

¶4. (C) Cormack expressed U.S. gratitude for GOL's current contributions in Afghanistan, their offer of assistance with the relocation of Guantanamo detainees, and the heartwarming commemorations ceremonies marking the 65th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge which she attended on December 16. She invited feedback concerning President Obama's recent Afghanistan announcement.

¶5. (C) Friden expressed Luxembourg's gratitude for the sacrifices of American soldiers to "give us our freedom." He shifted to Afghanistan and said that although Luxembourg was "

feeling the effects of the German incident in Afghanistan," the recent debate in the Chamber of Deputies concerning continued support for Luxembourg's involvement went well. He said 59 out of 60 votes cast were in favor of continued support for GOL's current military deployment and development efforts in Afghanistan. (note: The "incident" Friden mentioned occurred on September 4 when German forces in Afghanistan called in an airstrike that killed up to 142, many of them civilians. End note.) He cautioned however that "political concerns are still strong" and there "needs to be work on the visibility of results" as we move forward. He added that the E.U. recently adopted an action plan which he believes will strengthen the coordination between the civilian and security sectors. According to Friden the E.U. plan calls for more trainers for the security sector with increasing attention to agriculture, schools and infrastructure. He mentioned that although the NATO and Europol missions aim is to send Gendarmerie elements as they are police with military skills, Luxembourg's Gendarmerie was merged into the police some years ago and thus do not have those skills.

16. (S) Responding to Cormack's request for GOL's take on President Obama's Afghanistan announcement, Friden said Luxembourg was committed to the Afghanistan effort until 2011 but the GOL had some concerns. He stated that there was unease with the announcement of July 2011 as Luxembourg "didn't want to be the ones left to turn out the lights." Pol/Econ Chief responded that July

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2011 was only the beginning of a withdrawal, subject to conditions on the ground at the time, not a firm withdrawal date. Friden replied that there was concern for even the perception of a date for a withdrawal and "lights out." He said other concerns included a "general mood within the GOL and the E.U. concerning expectations of progress and a need to start to talk to Afghanistan regarding progress on corruption." Friden emphasized that public opinion and support for Luxembourg's involvement won't last forever and more "good news stories" needed to be forthcoming. Cormack stated that the U.S. shares GOL's concerns regarding corruption and would welcome an E.U. partnership to manage the corruption issue, but that stating those concerns publicly would not be helpful. Friden responded that he expected there would be pressure in the upcoming meetings in London to be more assertive on the corruption subject. Welfring asserted that Luxembourg public opinion was being shaped negatively by the German media as more Luxembourgers obtain their international news from German TV channels in Luxembourg than French stations. He said that the ascendancy of the German language had more to do with the number of available television channels from Germany than any other factor. He added that more trips to Germany by GOL politicians, and the "crumbling need for French as one was no longer seen as lower class" if one could not speak French were also factors.

17. (C) Welfring stated the MOD's 3-D approach of Diplomacy, Development and Defense, which began 10 years ago, had made progress. He explained that the Luxembourg Army is "Foreign Policy by other means" because border security is not an issue for the GOL. He said the army was undergoing reform and there have been a number of missions that the army has not been able to perform. (NFI). He explained that there was no possibility of increasing the number of Luxembourg soldiers from their current nine in the short run as they had 23 in Kosovo and others in the Congo and Bosnia. Welfring asserted that the GOL was shy about going public with it's contributions for Afghanistan but the Minister of Defense, Jean-Marie Halsdorf, decided December 16 to contribute 375,000 USD for satellite use where it was possible to switch "SES Global" commercial capabilities to military use. He said the in kind contributions would expand to three million USD in 2010. He said Luxembourg was committed to the Afghanistan effort until 2011 but a more integrated approach, between the civilian and military efforts, was needed.

¶8. (SBU) Welfring provided a spread sheet of additional "Afghanistan funding from Luxembourg."

- Afghanistan National Army trust fund
6,000,000 USD for 2010 (same as 2009)
- Shape and NAMSAT satellite communications (in kind)
3,000,000 USD for 2010 (up from 375,000 in 2009)
- UN/UNDP/UNFPA/WFP/ICRC/NGOs
3,500,000 USD for 2009 (up from 3 million in 2008)
- DPKO/UNMAS anti-mine action Afghanistan
300,000 USD for 2009
- UNDP electoral support
125,000 USD for 2009

¶9. (C) Comment. While the tone of the meeting was overwhelmingly positive it was not surprising to learn that GOL's additions will be primarily financial. GOL's reticence to increase troops beyond nine, all presently at the Kabul airport, is likely more a domestic public support issue than a strategic military decision and therefore subject to change should sufficient "good news" stories overcome current negative public perceptions. Luxembourg's army reform consists of a planned 40 percent expansion from 1000 to 1400 personnel by 2013. Portions of their expanding niche capabilities of water purification, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), and reconnaissance units are to become available as early as 2010 and might be units to be requested in the future.
Evans